



# City of Lowell – Community Preservation Committee

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## Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 28 2021 6:30 p.m.

Conducted in-person and via zoom

**Note:** These minutes are not completed verbatim. For a recording of the meeting, visit [www.ltc.org](http://www.ltc.org)

### Members Present

Adam Baacke, Chair  
Eric Slagle, Vice Chair  
Sinead Gallivan, Member  
Sidney Liang, Member  
Bradley Buitenhuys, Member  
Philip Shea, Member  
Troy Depeiza, Member

### Members Absent

John Linnehan, Member  
Christine McCall, Member

### Others Present

Dylan Ricker, Assistant Planner

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A quorum of the Committee was present. A. Baacke called the meeting to order at 6:31pm. Members attending remotely include, Member Gallivan, Member Shea, and Member Depeiza.

### I. Minutes for Approval

#### 9/30 Minutes

P. Shea motioned, and B. Buitenhuys seconded the motion to approve the September 30, 2021 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

### II. Continued Business

### III. New Business

A. Baacke explained the time limit for all presentations and the public input process. A. Baacke added that the CPC will not deliberate or vote on decisions until after all applications have been heard.

### CPA Application: 243 Worthen Street, 01852

The Whistler House Museum of Art has applied to the Community Preservation Committee seeking \$400,000 of CPA funds for an Outdoor Recreation project. The applicant proposes to expand and rehabilitate the existing park at 243 Worthen Street, abutting the Whistler House Museum. The application proposed to turn the existing park into a multi-functional green space.

### On Behalf:

None

### In Favor:

None

In Opposition:

None

Discussion:

None

Motion:

B. Buitenhuys motioned, and E. Slagle seconded the motion to continue the presentation to the December 16, 2021 CPC meeting. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

**CPA Application: Clemente Park, 01851**

The Clemente Park Committee has applied to the Community Preservation Committee seeking \$110,000 of CPA funds for an Outdoor Recreation project. The applicant proposes to use the funds for improvements to Clemente Park including upgrades to the playground equipment, benches, and the basketball court.

On Behalf:

Sambath Bo, Applicant

S. Bo stated she is a member of the Clemente Park Committee. The Committee was organized in 2011 and is most well-known for the Khmer celebration at Clemente Park. S. Bo added that the committee does annual clean ups of the park in coordination with the City and the organization is 100% volunteer based.

Rothanak Sarath, Applicant

R. Sarath stated that in the past the park has been known as a dangerous park. R. Sarath stated the goal is to improve the park, show that the park is not as dangerous as it used to be, and to bring the community together. R. Sarath said the Committee currently holds community events at the park. R. Sarath said the park is in poor condition and is being used by the homeless. R. Sarath said that investment in the park will benefit the community.

R. Sarath cited the CPA survey results which demonstrated that Open Space and Recreation and parks and playgrounds were rated as very important by a majority of respondents. R. Sarath explained the photos of the playground equipment showing that it is not in good condition and in some cases is no longer there. R. Sarath stated that the basketball court is not even and the pavement is cracked making it difficult to dribble and use the court. R. Sarath added that the benches are no longer attached and pose a safety hazard. R. Sarath stated that upgrading the park will increase the usage of the park and make the area safer.

In Favor:

None

In Opposition:

None

Discussion:

S. Liang asked if the applicant had taken a look at the entire park and looked into the possibility of redoing it in its entirety rather than just upgrading portions of it. S. Liang asked if the applicant had reviewed the bigger picture plans for the park. S. Bo said the proposal includes improvements via upgrades which would make the park more user friendly and accessible for everyone.

S. Liang stated that he is concerned that the funding will not be enough to complete the proposed work.

E. Slagle asked the applicant if they had met with DPD and incorporated their comments with the proposed budget. S. Bo confirmed they met with DPD staff and that staff helped estimate the price. S. Bo said they are waiting on a list of approved vendors to get a more accurate estimate.

A. Baacke asked whether the City agreed to assist with the process of completing and overseeing the scope of work. S. Bo said it was their understanding they would work with the City to complete the work since it is a City park. S. Bo added they will be prioritizing which items they feel are most important.

A. Baacke said that the CPC is specifically prohibited from funding turf and asked the applicant for clarification on what they were referring to as turf. S. Bo clarified that the turf is referring to rubberized ground for the playground which is durable and safer. A. Baacke asked staff to research whether this type of turf is eligible, D. Ricker agreed.

**CPA Application: 1413-1415 Varnum Avenue (Rollie's Farm), Lowell, MA, 01854**

Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, Mass Audubon, and Mill City Grows has applied to the Community Preservation Committee seeking \$1,500,000 of CPA funds for an Open Space and Outdoor Recreation project. The applicant proposes to utilize the funding to acquire, preserve, and redevelop Rollie's Farm into an urban wildlife sanctuary, urban farmland, and education center. The project would preserve the area comprising of roughly 20 acres.

**On Behalf:**

Jane Calvin, Applicant

J. Calvin stated that this project will protect Rollie's Farm, Lowell's last farm. J. Calvin stated the farm has been on Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust's radar since the 1990s, and the plan emerged after they received word of (the farm operator's) retirement. J. Calvin stated the plan is to include a trail network, scenic views, community gardens, and office and program space. J. Calvin stated that protecting this property is the last chance to protect significant acreage within the City of Lowell. J. Calvin said the property's proximity to the Merrimack River and the Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsboro State Forest provides a critical wildlife corridor. J. Calvin stated they will be developing a master plan to include native woodland and grassland restoration among other projects. J. Calvin stated that the property will incorporate community input and will be open to the public, and address community needs outlined in City planning documents. J. Calvin added they intend to protect this property in perpetuity. J. Calvin said they intend to acquire the two parcels and are in conversations with the City about putting a Conservation Restriction on the property. J. Calvin stated CPA funding will demonstrate strong local support and commitment enabling them to leverage the funds for additional outside funds.

Jessica Wilson, Applicant

J. Wilson stated that the project is a major opportunity for a large food justice and education space in the City of Lowell. J. Wilson said that Mill City Grows has work across the City to increase urban farms, this project is far larger and provides them an opportunity to grow, educate, and distribute in one space. J. Wilson added that the farm has a bus stop directly across the street making it accessible to all residents.

Bob Wilbur, Applicant

B. Wilbur stated that Mass Audubon has been active in establishing wildlife sanctuaries in urban settings and has successfully done so. B. Wilbur added that the organization is experienced in youth educational programs and this location would be their flagship opportunity.

**In Favor:**

None

In Opposition:

None

Discussion:

E. Slagle asked about the timeline for the project, and asked whether phasing of funding is possible and to what extent. J. Calvin clarified that they are applying under only Open Space. J. Calvin said there are two parcels they are seeking to purchase with CPA funds, the applicant has 23 months to acquire the upper parcel and 30 months to acquire the lower parcel from 10/13/2021. J. Calvin said that the property owner would like to wait until after the 2023 Christmas season to sell the property giving them until April 2024 to acquire the parcels. J. Calvin stated they would welcome phased funding.

E. Slagle asked how much funding is required for each parcel. J. Calvin said it depends on fundraising and what the CPA can allocate. The timeline was intentional to ensure there were multiple CPA cycles for requests due to the size of the development.

A. Baacke stated the full budget is far larger than the request and asked if the applicant had the ability to fund the full project if it does not receive the full CPA allocation. A. Baacke asked whether the acquisition of the property would be successful even if the project is not funded in full.

B. Wilbur said that MassAudubon is beginning the process of fundraising and stated the contracts are only signed recently. B. Wilbur stated that each organization will work toward fundraising for the project. B. Wilbur said the acquisition cost alone is a significant, and they are committed to acquiring it. The CPA funding is a major part of the fundraising strategy to make the project feasible. B. Wilbur stated that he is a CPC chair and is familiar with the process and understands the CPA funding challenges. B. Wilbur stated they do not have a definitive answer at this point in the fundraising process. B. Wilbur stated in subsequent funding requests the applicants can provide funding updates.

J. Wilson said they are building their fundraising plan and having significant CPA funding helps with fundraising. J. Wilson noted that the ask is beyond feasible for one funding cycle, but the City showing support can assist with fundraising.

A. Baacke said that the request could be through as few as two CPA funding cycles based on the timeline. In the event that the CPC wants to support this project through three cycles is there a way to borrow against the incoming funds to allow the property to be purchased. J. Calvin said they had options to fund the acquisition for the months before the third funding cycle.

A. Baacke asked whether this project would impact other Mill City Grows locations and asked whether the other sites would continue to operate. J. Wilson said the plan is to continue farming on the other sites, and added that the different sites have different amenities that benefit the organization. J. Wilson noted that the additional land will help them meet the demand for their food. J. Wilson stated that after acquiring the property they would test the soil and complete any necessary remediation prior to farming the land.

S. Liang asked whether they need to acquire both properties and asked if there is a competitor to purchase the land. J. Calvin said a portion of the land was sold to a developer in the early 2000s and she assumes that developers would purchase the property. J. Calvin stated that they cannot purchase one without the other since that would not allow for the full project to be completed, and would inhibit the connection with the Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsboro State Forest.

**CPA Application: 555 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA, 01854**

The Coalition for a Better Acre has applied to the Community Preservation Committee seeking \$500,000 of CPA funds for a Community Housing and Outdoor Recreation project. The applicant proposes to redevelop the vacant building at 555 Merrimack Street into 27 units of affordable housing, and supportive services for people with substance abuse disorders.

On Behalf:

Russell Pandres, Applicant

R. Pandres stated the goal of the project is to provide social and community supports within the affordable housing development to assist residents with substance abuse disorders. R. Pandres stated the development aims to address the housing needs of clients with substance abuse disorders and to keep clients stably housed. R. Pandres said there will be resident services and case management services for residents as well as community programming. R. Pandres said that all local permits other than the building permit have been obtained as well as the Mass. State Historical Commission project notification form.

R. Pandres stated that the project will cost \$13.1 million with construction costs making the majority of the costs. R. Pandres added that they are working with a development team experienced in both affordable housing and passive house construction. R. Pandres said with the support of the CPC they intend to begin construction in April 2022 with construction expected to end June 2023 with full leasing by October 2023.

R. Pandres explained that passive house design is used by architects to create heat transfer throughout the building making it more energy efficient. R. Pandres stated CBA anticipates 75% less site energy use from a comparable multi-family building. R. Pandres stated the project aligns with multiple Open Space and Recreation and Community Housing goals from the CPA Plan. R. Pandres said that \$27,000 of the CPA funding would go Open Space and Recreation for landscaping improvements and \$473,000 would go to direct construction of the affordable housing. R. Pandres added that \$25,000 would go toward a capitalized reserve which in total would be \$50,000 to be used for residents to apply for in the event they must go into detox or if they are having income issues.

Claire Ricker, Applicant

C. Ricker stated the project is shovel ready and presents an opportunity for the CBA to provide supportive housing. C. Ricker said the CBA has recently built affordable veterans housing in Dracut and Haverhill, and this would be the first Passive House in Lowell.

In Favor:

None

In Opposition:

None

Discussion:

P. Shea asked whether this was the same development team as 305 Gorham Street. R. Pandres said the CBA has a different development team. P. Shea stated that he was impressed with the 305 Gorham Street project and was glad to see all local permits had been obtained.

S. Gallivan asked whether all 27 units will be income restricted. R. Pandres said they will be, part of the funding is LIHTC and all units will be at a minimum below 60% AMI with most units being lower.

E. Slagle asked whether funding for this project could be phased based on estimated costs and expenditures. R. Pandres stated that ideally the funding would be up front to make the project smoother, but phasing is feasible.

A. Baacke asked if the project is shovel ready in regards to funding from other sources. R. Pandres confirmed this, and said it received state funding, and the project is awaiting a loan requested from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston.

A. Baacke asked for clarification as to whether CBA owns the property. R. Pandres stated CBA owns the property and the deed states the site is owned by an LLC wholly owned by CBA.

#### **IV. Other Business**

##### Community Preservation Committee Dues

The Community Preservation Coalition extended an invitation to join the Community Preservation Coalition. The membership dues are \$2,875 which can be allocated from the Administrative funding category. Member communities receive technical assistance, CPA training sessions and regional conferences. Additionally, the Community Preservation Coalition advocates on behalf of CPCs at the state level. Coalition membership is not required.

B. Buitenhuys said he is supportive and joining the Community Preservation Coalition is a great opportunity to learn more about the program, and expressed his support for joining. E. Slagle agreed and added that the amount of funding the City is likely to receive in return for the lobbying interest is likely to exceed the amount spent.

##### Motion:

E. Slagle motioned, and B. Buitenhuys seconded the motion to approve the \$2,875 of CPA funding for Community Preservation Coalition Dues. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

##### Review and Approve Proposed 2022 Community Preservation Committee Schedule

A. Baacke summarized the proposed schedule which includes more meetings during application periods and fewer during off months. A. Baacke stated the proposed meeting schedule likely has more meetings than necessary.

T. Depeiza said the schedule works for him. E. Slagle agreed and said it is better to include extra meetings as it easier to cancel meetings if they are not necessary.

B. Buitenhuys motioned, and T. Depeiza seconded the motion to approve the 2022 Community Preservation Committee schedule. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

#### **V. Notices**

#### **VI. Further Comments from Community Preservation Committee Members**

A. Baacke thanked applicants for applying and those participating as the program is meant to serve the residents of the City.

#### **VII. Adjournment**

B. Buitenhuys motioned, and E. Slagle seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0). The time was 7:33pm.